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ABSTRACT

This publication briefly presents the elements of preschool education that are key within a Catholic setting. Chapter I briefly discusses aspects of the influence of values education on childrens' emotional experience. Chapter II, describes, also briefly, aspects of a Catholic pre-kindergarten program, including the young children as well as administrative concerns such as age of entrance, length of day, class size and facilities, staff, and materials. Chapter III provides an overview of the pre-kindergarten curriculum. Specific attention is given to general preparatory activities and religion, language arts, mathematics, and science. Chapter IV describes the kindergarten program in terms of its purposes, young children, learning, the kindergarten teacher, parent-teacher relationships, administrative concerns, and the daily schedule. Chapter V focuses on the kindergarten curriculum. Religious education, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts are described. A few illustrative learning activities are appended. (RH)

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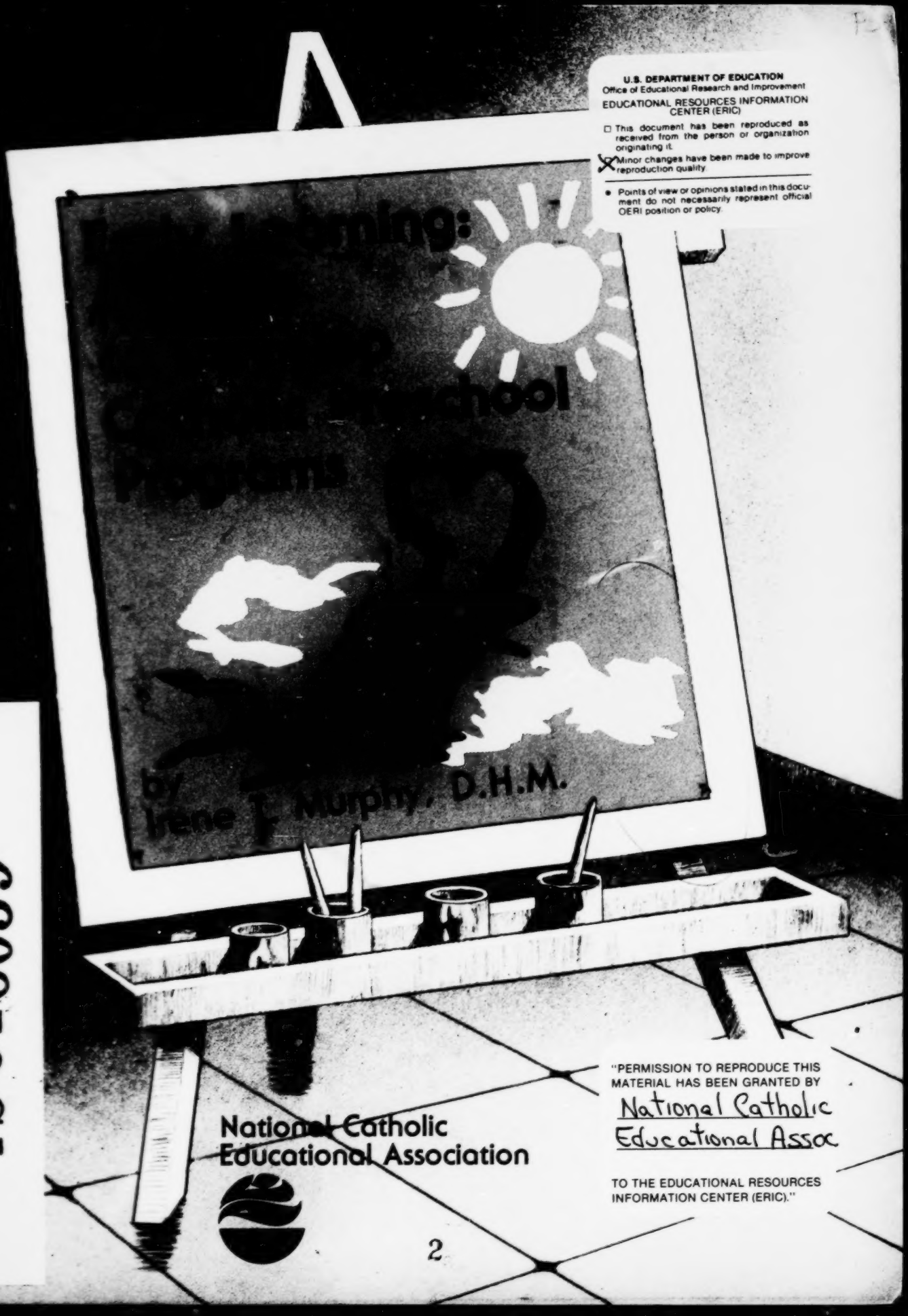

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National Catholic Educational Association

Early Learning: A Guide to Develop Catholic Preschool Programs

by
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and
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Preface

Because children shape their basic values in their early years, Catholic educators who offer pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs have added opportunities for value education.

This publication presents simply and briefly the elements of preschool education that are key within a Catholic setting. We encourage those in leadership to consider developing these forms of early childhood education.

We wish to acknowledge those who have contributed to this manuscript:

- the Archdiocese of New York educational staff for invaluable suggestions and for permission to use the format of *Essential Learnings* in the Kindergarten section;
- Sisters Mary Amelia and Mary John Kearney, OP, of Caldwell College who contributed a wealth of suggestions;
- educators in many dioceses who have shared their guidelines for preschool programs (some are listed in the Bibliography);
- Ms. Wendy Royston and Ms. Chris LaMarca of the NCEA staff who helped to transform the manuscript into this completed publication.

Most of all we acknowledge and sincerely thank

- the major author, Irene T. Murphy, D.H.M., Early Childhood Consultant for the NCEA Department of Elementary Schools and Early Childhood Director for the Archdiocese of New York, and all who encouraged her during the development process.

We hope that this publication will help many Catholic educators to initiate or strengthen programs for preschoolers.

Sister Carleen Reck, SSND
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Department of Elementary Schools
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Introduction

Young children gradually grow in readiness for schooling. Their curiosity makes them eager to know and learn. Their discovery and exploration of the world raises many questions. As they learn about themselves and others as well as about God's gifts in nature, they develop a caring attitude for creation.

Programs for three-and four-year olds focus on enabling children to discover their world through directed sense experiences. These young children learn through activities related to seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and manipulating. These preschoolers need opportunities to work alone or in small groups.

On the other hand, kindergarten-age children will continue to increase their knowledge of the world through activities designed to help develop self-awareness. They have learned to work with their peers since they are growing in social awareness. Generally, they prefer to be with others.

Because of the differences between pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, this publication treats separately the administrative and curricular aspects for each of these levels. The terms "preschool" and "early childhood education" may be used in various ways. Within this publication, however, "preschool" and "early childhood" refer to the programs of pre-kindergarten as well as kindergarten to youngsters ages three to five.

Chapter 1

Values Development In Young Children

Preschool programs help to inculcate the Gospel values of community, faith, hope, courage, reconciliation, service, justice, and love by simple and concrete activities. Young children can be encouraged to grow in reverence for one another and be supportive in the spirit of community. As the teacher and children create an atmosphere of loving concern, each child grows gradually in independence and cooperation.

Young children's discoveries of the mysteries of the world through the various aspects of a preschool curriculum result from their natural curiosity and sense of wonder and awe. The children's personal relationships with God grow as they discover all of God's gifts to them. Through their senses, they learn who they are and who others are. As youngsters begin to discover some of the mysteries of nature, they come to understand that people and the world are gifts of a loving God.

When courtesy lessons are given, children learn that graciousness is more than politeness. It is reverence. The way they speak and act toward other preschoolers, staff members, a parent or sibling gives evidence of the respect that they have for the presence of God within other people.

Hope grows for young children as they learn to have positive views on the happenings of each day at home and at school. A smile from another child or the teacher helps children develop confidence and acceptance of themselves. Laughter with others enables young children to see a lighter and brighter side of life. Optimism helps children live with a joy-filled hope. Parents and teachers model this positive attitude.

To say "I'm sorry" to another youngster or an adult helps children realize that they have limitations. As preschoolers play and work with others, they find that they need to maintain a spirit of harmony. When they learn to interact with others in the early childhood program, they become aware that all people deserve respect. When they understand that other persons may get upset if they don't get to use all the blocks or the easel, young children discover that all people have strengths and weaknesses. Children also learn to assume the good faith of another and not judge the motive behind an action. Finally, times throughout a school day provide children opportunities to resolve conflicts without direct adult interference.

The Gospel value of courage for very young children may be manifested by not complaining when there is some suffering in their lives. The attitude of acceptance develops gradually as adults set an example for the children. When young children face the challenge to tell the truth which may involve some form of punishment, they need to have courage. Adults help by enabling children to realize that the action is the focus and not the preschooler. Honesty also demands courage. Three, four, and five year olds are capable

of developing this value when they are assured that there is no lessening of love if they tell the truth.

Service to others within the program is based on respect. The opportunity to listen to another at "Show and Tell" time is one way to be of service to others in school. Helping each other to put away toys and cleaning the tables after art work or snacks are other simple ways to develop the Gospel value of service in children.

As young children begin to realize that they may not take materials from other children without permission, they learn an appreciation of the right of privacy of each other. This provides a chance to develop the Gospel value of justice. Children also learn that they are to be fair in dealing with others. This involves taking only a few blocks when others want some; conserving materials when they paint or cut paper; being patient while the teacher brings the class to attention; caring for all school materials in order that others may use them.

The Gospel value of love permeates the whole preschool environment. It is "caught rather than taught" by the children from the adults with whom they spend each school day. As young children show care and concern for themselves as well as for others, they come to realize that "Love your neighbor as yourself" has special meaning. The teacher's simple greeting of welcome as they enter the class every day helps them to feel loved. They learn by example what love means.

Love in the preschool program is also shown when the children greet one another with "Hi! How are you?" Listening to the answer to this question helps them to show love for the other person. Children working and playing in school show their love by being considerate of the noise level within the room. Another way young children show their love for others in the group is to pray for them and their intentions.

Basically, values are developed in the young child—not through direct teaching or preaching—but rather through everyday atmosphere and opportunities.

Chapter II

The Pre-Kindergarten Program

Young Children

Children entering the pre-kindergarten program have already established foundations of their personalities. Future growth stems from these early years. Three and four year olds bring themselves as well as part of their home to the school as they begin this new experience. The adults in the pre-kindergarten program consider this, and they give to children the necessary help to build bridges between these two parts of their lives and to integrate them. Having left the security of the home where they were the primary concern of the people there, youngsters find the preschool experience exciting because it is unfamiliar. However, many youngsters experience fear as they enter this different environment. For many children, school is the first large group experience beyond the home. This "new world" includes people, places, and things other than their home and neighborhood.

Research has shown that the first few years of life account for the most rapid growth in physical and mental powers and for the greatest susceptibility to environmental influences. The exposure of children to a wide variety of activities and opportunities for social and mental interactions with other children and adults greatly enriches their ability to learn. Growing and learning in a positive Christian setting is beneficial if the environment meets the needs and interests of children.

Administrative Concerns

1. AGE OF ENTRANCE. Children whose third or fourth birthday falls within the calendar year of admission are ordinarily admitted to pre-kindergarten. Generally, however, administrators use flexible admission procedures. In schools where three year olds are admitted, they can be joined with the four year olds in the same environment. An equal distribution of the ages benefits all the children and challenges the staff.

2. LENGTH OF DAY. Since the pre-kindergarten often answers the needs of the single parent and/or the working parent, the length of the school day varies. A half-day session lasts two to three hours. An extended day program allows such parents or guardians greater flexibility in their commitments. An extended day program includes a more creative time for the self-selection of activities in music, art, physical development, literature, and storytime. Children who leave the school premises at different times may be in the same room. The assistant/aide supervises these dismissals. Ordinarily, the schedule for the pre-kindergarten follows the arrival and

dismissal times of the elementary school. However, safety factors need to be considered.

3. CLASS SIZE AND FACILITIES. The number of three and four year olds in a class depends on the size of the room. Approximately 30-35 square feet per child is desirable. Physical facilities should comply with the local and state building codes. The learning area accommodates the maximum number of three and four year olds safely, comfortably, and healthfully as they participate in their varied learning activities.

Furniture includes small movable chairs and tables and low shelving. All displayed materials appear at children's eye level. Lavatories can be within the room or nearby and should be sized for the young child. Low hooks facilitate the hanging of clothing. It is advisable, where possible, that a source of water is in the room, either in a sink area or in a large container, for example, a coffee urn or a bucket.

4. STAFF. Ordinarily, a certified teacher with an assistant/aide assumes responsibility for a mixed group of fifteen three and four year olds. The ratio of adults to children depends on the age of the children in the program and any guidelines of the local school district or state/city regulations. Volunteers may assist at various times throughout the day. Senior citizens/grandparents also are happy to work periodically with young children. However, the teacher insures that the volunteer understands how young children learn and knows the classroom routines.

5. MATERIALS. Learning centers in the pre-kindergarten program include a variety of materials for many different purposes:

- **to refine sensory perception**—puzzles with large and small knobs; beads for stringing; manipulative toys such as Lego, mixing bowls, buttons for sorting; rice and water for pouring; fabrics for touching.
- **to develop self-care skills**—frames for fastening buttons, pulling zippers, tightening buckles, lacing shoes.
- **to stimulate creative expression**—clay, paints, and crayons; a small area for recitals or dramatic expression; a housekeeping corner with clothing and utensils.
- **to stimulate a love for reading**—a sufficient supply of books of children's classics and the best of current books; books dealing with rhyme, fantasy, imagination and information; picture books and books with print; an area rug or oversized pillows make a corner aesthetically pleasing and inviting.

Chapter III

The Pre-Kindergarten Curriculum

It is important that the pre-kindergarten does not become a kindergarten or a first grade. All activities used in a pre-kindergarten environment aid in the development and maturation of young children and follow a sequential pattern.

General Preparatory Activities

The following list includes activities which help young children gain independence, develop large and small muscle coordination, and care for themselves as well as for the environment at home and at school:

Pouring: (See sample lesson in Appendix A.)
- peas, rice, beans, water, then milk or juice

Carrying and placing down silently:
- a chair
- manipulative materials, e.g., puzzle
- a table carried by several children
- mats for working on floor including how to roll and unroll them

Cutting:
- carrots or other vegetables for snacks or soups
- arranging flowers for use in the environment

Washing:
- hands
- leaves of a plant with a Q-tip
- table and counter tops, if washable
- own sneakers using a small hand brush
- finger nails using a nail brush

Tidying and cleaning:
- setting a table for group at snack time
- brushing crumbs off table with a crumber
- dusting shelves, chairs, materials in environment
- sweeping area in room
- vacuuming a rug or using a carpet sweeper
- easel and tray after painting

Polishing:
- table

shoes
silver
brass
a mirror
doorknobs
any wooden materials in environment

Developing good manners:
using the "magic words" of *Please, Thank you,* and *You're Welcome*
greeting others
excusing one's self
allowing another to pass
offering one's help
inviting someone into a room
introducing guests
taking and giving a message
using correctly a handkerchief/tissue
asking pardon of someone
giving place to another
sitting down and standing quietly

Dressing and undressing:
buttoning a coat, jacket, sweater
tying shoes
using a zipper

Opening and closing:
a door with a bolt
different kinds of boxes, bottles, jars
a book, turning pages carefully
cupboard doors, drawers

Folding and unfolding:
napkins/tablecloths
towels
clothes, e.g., simple scarves
paper (free folding)
pieces of cloth with lines stitched on them; later, without lines on them
pairs of socks

Packing and unpacking:
wrapping a book, a box
packing a snack lunch, a picnic lunch

Exercises in equilibrium: (See sample lesson in Appendix B.)
walking on the line with each foot placed on it
with feet on the line, hands by sides
with feet on line, hands by sides, head erect
with feet in heel-toe position, hands and head as above

with feet in heel-toe position, head erect,
with a flag in one hand, later with flags in both hands
with feet on line, carrying a tray with a solid object
with a glass of water
with tray with a glass of colored water
with bell or bells without letting them ring
with book or basket on head
with small bowl of water in hands
with a banner, a drum, musical instrument, etc.
with any piece of equipment (e.g., puzzle, blocks)

walking on a narrow/wide balance beam

Keeping silence:

when relaxing on the floor or on a rug
sitting on a chair quietly
listening to one's name whispered by teacher
walking on tiptoe when name is called
carrying out commands called in a whisper
listening for other soft noises
listening to soft music
thinking

The teacher may present these exercises to the whole group in a simple, clear manner, allowing the children to choose a task and do it as long as their interest lasts.

Religion

The goals for the Catholic educator in a preschool program should include these:

to give children a sense of God
to help children discover God's love for them
to shape attitudes of love and respect for self and others
to learn how to share with others

Some examples of activities that help achieve these goals are these:

taking the children on walks to collect leaves; feel the bark of the trees; smell the various odors in the neighborhood (e.g., a gasoline station, a restaurant, a flower)

asking children to listen to the sounds around them (e.g., birds, leaves, a city bus, an airplane, automobiles)

allowing children an opportunity to feel the wind and/or the snow on their faces

helping children develop an awareness of God's creation through the senses

The examples of nature that the group collects outdoors can be brought back to the room and put on a table with a sign, "Please touch." Later, children can prepare a booklet with pictures of things they can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch.

These words can be sung to the tune of "The Farmer in the Dell":

God gave us eyes to see
God gave us eyes to see
We thank Him and we praise Him
He gave us eyes to see.
(Continue with the other senses.)

Experiencing creation in all its wonderful manifestations helps children to become conscious of the gifts of nature. Observation of beauty surrounding preschoolers develops a reverence as the children's sense of wonder grows. Gradually children realize that all nature, people, plants, and animals, are the gifts of a loving God. Later, they understand that the greatest gift of love is Jesus Christ.

Sharing for young children happens gradually as they learn to move from the ego-centered/possessive stage to the higher level of caring about others. The sense of community comes when puzzles and blocks are shared, or when snacks are prepared by a group of children (e.g., spreading peanut butter on crackers, cutting celery, apples, bananas, vegetables for soups). All can learn that there are others in this world for whom they should show loving care.

Language Arts

Speaking skills develop through the following activities:

1. To help children speak in a clear and exact manner, the teacher provides opportunities for them to listen and repeat nursery rhymes, such as, Mary Had a Little Lamb, Jack Be Nimble, etc.
2. Young children learn to repeat a message as well as to deliver one to the principal, office, or secretary through frequent opportunities.
3. When the children bring something to share with the group (e.g., a toy, a picture), they express themselves to the group in complete sentences.
4. The use of a telephone in a preschool program will enable children to pretend to report a fire or accident giving details of name, address, etc.
5. Group activity can be to report someone who is "lost" by giving the full description of what the child was wearing and the place where he/she was last seen. Another child may act as policeman and choose the "lost child" from the description given.
6. Opportunities for dramatic play (e.g., acting out nursery rhymes, a favorite story, using puppets) will allow children to develop speaking skills. Reciting well known rhymes as a group can help children recognize rhyme and patterns of rhyme. They can also listen to a record to determine rhyming words, as a class or using individual headsets.

Listening skills can also be developed.

1. Children distinguish sounds heard when the teacher taps a drum, an empty glass, a can or a container half filled with water.

2. The children turn their backs, listen carefully and identify what the teacher does; e.g., crumples paper, claps hands, or closes a door.

3. Rhythm band instruments may be used to help the children distinguish the various sounds with/without closing their eyes.

4. Keeping time to various moods in music by marching, skipping, dancing to the piano or to records can develop keen listening skills in young children.

5. The children listen to the story the teacher reads or tells and they repeat it in their own words.

Mathematics

In the pre-kindergarten children engage in a variety of pre-math activities.

1. Concepts—By working with materials such as blocks, cubes, peg boards, clay or puzzles, young children learn to do the following: match the numerals 1 to 10 with the appropriate sets of objects; develop an understanding of set; act out problems using simple addition; recognize geometric shapes such as square, circle, triangle, rectangle; discover one-to-one relationships.

2. Measurement—Young children match weights, sizes, lengths, shapes, containers, etc. They have opportunities to measure one another as well as things in the classroom; e.g., height of a table, a chair, a plant. As they work with different objects they discover that cans, jars, and boxes differ in their size, shape, and weight.

3. Time—Children's awareness of time has meaning in relation to the activities they do in the daytime and nighttime. Marking the calendar each day and recognizing special days such as birthdays and holidays will develop children's awareness of time intervals.

4. Spatial relationships—Children become aware of their space in the classroom, the space around them, the meaning of *near/far, under/over, up/down.*

5. Vocabulary—Young children receive opportunities to develop an awareness of terms such as *more than/less than, big/little, tall/short, heavy/light, whole/part, narrow/wide, full/empty, first/last.*

Science

The preschool program in science helps children to discover their immediate environment, to heighten their powers of observation, and to deepen their sense of wonder.

1. Environment—The teacher designs activities that enable children to learn more about their environment. In these activities the children handle stones and pebbles, crumble fresh and dried leaves, compare shells, feel soil and sand, play with magnets.

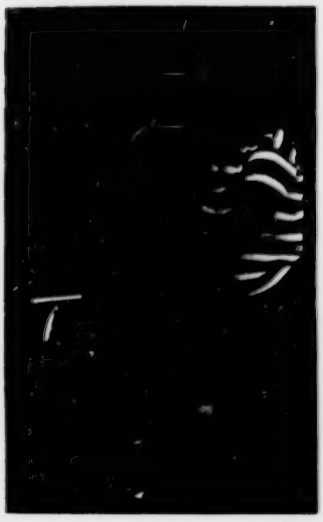
2. Skill of observation—The teacher provides a variety of activities to help develop the children's powers of observing through seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, and tasting. Plants, fish, gerbils, and/or hamsters in a classroom

provide children with many activities to foster their observation skills. Walks around the school block do the same. Trips to various neighborhood resources offer a third opportunity. Keeping a log of the changes in the four seasons of the year helps children record and organize their observations.

3. Sense of wonder—Through observing different aspects of their environment, the sense of wonder of youngsters expands. This sense of wonder engenders in them curiosity and from this springs questions which are the beginning of learning.

Chapter IV

The Kindergarten Program



Purposes

The kindergarten provides a transition environment from the home, the day care center, the nursery school, or the pre-kindergarten program to the structure of the formal school. The experiences that children have acquired elsewhere form the foundation upon which the kindergarten program is built. The kindergarten prepares children to learn by its various activities which include direct teaching of concepts and language, and by its atmosphere, which supports young students in their initial formal learning experiences.

The kindergarten can be described as a place where children can learn, do learn, and like to learn. It is just a beginning, it is *not* the first grade. It ascribes to the "whole child" philosophy. It exists to develop the personal readiness of children and to help them take the first steps in the total educational process. It remains a place free from rigid subject or skill requisites. Within its carefully planned framework, children throughout the whole day easily go from task to task, laying a foundation for future growth. In such a flexible and supportive structure, children learn to love and support themselves and show concern for others and all created things.

In kindergarten the teacher can identify students who may have potential problems in the areas of perceptual-motor or speech development, who experience hearing or visual impairment, or who display emotional insecurity. Having identified these areas of concern, the teacher can begin to provide a program to remediate their deficiencies. Thus, the kindergarten makes a valuable contribution to the students' entire future development.

Specifically, the kindergarten seeks to achieve the following four ends: 1. individuality, 2. socialization, 3. self-discipline, and 4. learning skills.

1. INDIVIDUALITY. Students in kindergarten receive a sense of their own individuality by being free to act independently and to make mistakes from which they learn. Since the young students possess a full measure of life, curiosity, joy, love, and interest, they need opportunities to be active, to move, to feel, to taste, to react. These learning activities develop independence, secure self-direction, and provide a firm foundation for continued success in learning.

Young children learn first to live with themselves and only later to relate to others. Therefore, one-to-one teaching is important. As they gradually discover how to relate socially to others, group instruction can take place.

2. SOCIALIZATION. Young self-centered students gradually learn to live

with different groups and to develop sensitivity to others. Through interactions with other students they adjust to the stress and strain of living in a social environment. They recognize the importance of what others think or feel. Learning to share ideas, materials, and resources for their work and play is an important early lesson in group living. Opportunities to share occur when students share an easel, work together with Cuisinaire rods, or share blocks.

The kindergarten also enables students to develop confidence (faith) in other adults besides those in their family. These young students respond to different authority figures and to the variety of rules and regulations that influence the behavior of all people.

An effective early childhood teacher does not attempt to effect sudden behavior changes in children who present undesirable patterns of social conduct. Such changes require growth not only in external behavior, but also in internal motivation. Such growth is developmental. As students internalize the need to interact with others in a socially acceptable manner, they pursue a more peaceful school experience because they recognize that it helps both themselves and their schoolmates. Character training forms an important part of the socialization process in the kindergarten.

3. SELF-DISCIPLINE. Maria Montessori said that "liberty within limits" fosters self-discipline in young children. In the classroom this concept relates to the common good. In order to give children a chance to make free choices, the teacher provides alternatives. Instead of asking children to choose an activity, the teacher asks, "Would you like to do a puzzle or to work with the blocks?" "Within limits" children choose and accept the responsibilities of their choices. The teacher generally strives to correct negative behavior by showing the students that better alternatives exist.

Jeannine Schmid, author of *Religion, Montessori, and the Home* (Benziger Inc., 1969), provides some rules which foster this "liberty within limits." Some of these rules include the following:

- Children keep their hands off one another's work unless invited. This engenders respect of self and one another.
- Children put away work before beginning another task. This signals the completion of a cycle of activity.
- Children wait their turns. Self-discipline is learning to tell oneself when to do something. Often this involves waiting. Since people cannot attend to everything at once, all people need to patiently wait.

The discipline of silence imposes frequent demands on kindergarten students; e.g., when walking in line, listening to stories, or doing pantomime. Activities that demand listening and observing prepare students for silence. Maria Montessori proposes the "Silence Game" (*The Discovery of Children*, Fides Publishing Co., 1967) to foster this skill.

Positive statements by teachers encourage students to be cooperative. Providing choices fosters self-responsibility. Self-discipline cannot be imposed from without. It grows from within. In order to obey, children need not

only the desire to obey, but they also must have the ability to obey. Respect for their own property and the property of others manifests growth in self-discipline.

Appropriate classroom discipline flows from clearly enunciated and understood rules and from a well organized schedule. The kindergarten has consistent, flexible, and few rules which the staff enforces. These "ground rules" are characterized by freedom within limits which provide students with opportunities for growth and independence. The rules insure the safety and good health of all the students. In addition to the above regulations, some other rules might include these:

- We walk in school.
- We return material to its place in good condition.
- We listen when another person speaks.

These and other simple rules may be displayed on a poster somewhere in the room. Periodically the teacher reviews these with the entire class. In addition, kindergarten children are generally expected to follow the rules of the particular school. Thus, the kindergarten students know the "Rules for the School" and the "Rules for the Classroom."

The teacher and the school administrator need to insure that the kindergarten students receive all the pupil personnel services provided to the entire school. These include such things as textbooks, transportation, meals, vision and auditory screening, remedial and guidance services.

4. LEARNING SKILLS. Learning skills refer to those dispositions and abilities that enable people to grow in all of life's aspects. One skill prepares the way for learning the next higher level skill. Some of these skills are learned formally in the school, other of these skills are learning informally through the experiences of life. Thus, the typical kindergarten class will contain students possessing all different levels of learning skills. The school provides for the orderly, sequential, and gradual introduction into these skills. The kindergarten program ensures that the basic learning skills needed for success in the primary grades are mastered. What are some of these fundamental skills?

- listening
- expressing ideas verbally
- expressing ideas through the arts
- observing details, sameness and differences
- focusing on one activity
- questioning
- following directions
- developing orderliness

Play functions as an integral part of the learning process for young children. Play brings them into contact with the world of things and people. Through play children order their world into meaningful elements. For example, playing with blocks enables children to experiment, to disregard unworkable ideas, to discover relationships, and to observe how others solve problems.

Young Children and Learning

How do children learn? Children fix their attention on a certain piece of work, persevere at this work, and then are able to repeat it. Kindergarten activities and materials enable children to recognize size, form, order, texture, sound, and number. Maria Montessori, in *Spontaneous Activity in Education* (Schocken Books, 1965), stated that children work with a certain rhythm which enables them to begin again with energy each time. She called this the "cycle of activity." Each cycle has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Children do not hurry to the end.

The teacher realizes that young children learn to a great extent through their feelings and senses. They take delight in things. They have a sense of wonder, of enjoying and loving what they see, hear, taste, smell and touch. The teacher presents opportunities that enable children to discover through sensory experiences the many wonderful things that can be enjoyed and done with the senses; for example, tasting the difference between foods that are sweet or sour; smelling a rose and tulip; feeling coarse and smooth materials; and comparing and matching shades of color.

Kindergarten children tend to be direct, spontaneous, and simple. They display all their reactions; e.g., interest, boredom, puzzlement, anger, misunderstanding, fear, and joy.

The Kindergarten Teacher

The kindergarten teacher models the gardener who accepts the differences in seeds and nurtures each in a special manner until it blossoms. This teacher has a clear sense of the world of children and appreciates their characteristics, inclinations, and capabilities. Developmentally the children are self-centered and absorbed in their own world. They do not seek to enter the adult world of preferences and sophistications. Piaget, in *Discovery, A Challenge to Teachers* (Prentice Hall, 1973), demonstrated children's inability to put themselves in other's shoes. Children at this stage wrap themselves in themselves.

The kindergarten teacher is faith-filled, warm, welcoming, fair, accepting, dependable, and consistent. The teacher's personality infuses the classroom environment. Young children depend upon adult attention, support, and love. In such a loving and warm atmosphere, children can accept the truths of the world. Since children imitate perfectly, the kindergarten teacher must be someone special.

The teacher encourages as well as models appropriate language. Through discussion and dialogue, the teacher helps the children to clarify their thinking. The teacher supports their ideas and challenges them to expand their concepts. The development of a positive self-concept enables children to formulate their own questions and to seek answers to them.

Piaget stated that a teacher of young children should be highly intelligent and highly trained. Competent kindergarten teachers use their knowledge of growth and development to direct children's learning throughout each day by various activities. A teacher has conviction about how children learn and does not yield to pressure regarding children's programs for academic growth.

A teacher has the task of instilling a sense of learning in young children. The real art of teaching consists in helping children teach themselves. This is not an easy task. The teacher of young children needs knowledge, experience, and inspiration that give untiring patience for the educational task, hope in the future, and the belief that in acting as an instrument of the Holy Spirit great things can be accomplished in little ones.

Parent-Teacher Relationships

The teacher and parents complement and supplement each other in the educational process. Their joint effort results in the betterment of the children. The kindergarten teacher and parents both share the responsibility for fostering a communication process that enhances this cooperative effort. The teacher communicates to the parents the program that the children will undertake, and the parents communicate to the teacher their concerns and the special needs of the child.

Some schools invite parents and children to visit the kindergarten room in the late spring or some other time before school opens. Some programs bring the new kindergarten students to school in small groups during the first days of the term. They become oriented to their environment in a friendly, relaxed way without the pressure of having to relate to large numbers of students immediately. Such a program provides a more personal approach for the children's initial contact with school, new friends, and adults.

Later in the year, parents are invited to spend time in the regular kindergarten class. Children show them around and parents share snacks which their children have prepared. Many parents have talents which they can share with the kindergarten children. Artists, musicians, shopkeepers, and other professionals explain their work. From these presentations five-year olds learn about the world of work and gradually come to an awareness of the meaning of community.

Parents having a deeper understanding of the kindergarten program can better appraise children's growth and progress during this year. The teacher extends a special welcome to all parents when they visit or wish to have a private conference with the teacher. The teacher's projection of a cooperative spirit with the parents fosters a deeper relationship between the two and ultimately improves the performance of the students.

Administrative Concerns

1. LENGTH OF DAY. The length of the school day depends on the needs of the population. A student population coming primarily from working parents, having limited home enrichment opportunities, needing socializing experiences, or desiring more formal and earlier educational experiences may suggest the need for an extended day program. On the other hand, the school must have the appropriate facilities in terms of space, materials, security, and personnel to provide an effective full-day kindergarten.

A half-day kindergarten usually extends for two to three hours. Within this short period of time, a carefully planned program can provide a varie-

ty of learning opportunities for the students. Schools having two half-day kindergartens often have a different teacher for each session. The teacher may be reimbursed for half a day's work or reimbursed for a full day's work if the remainder of the day is spent in providing remedial instruction or some other instructional or administrative service.

The full-day kindergarten usually follows the arrival and dismissal times of the rest of the school. This program has the advantage of having increased time for enrichment in language development, music, art, physical education, and other curriculum areas.

A school considering how to provide extended care to children of working parents may wish to consult the publication, *The Catholic Elementary School Extension Program:* A "7 to 6" School for Children of "9 to 5" Parents (National Catholic Educational Association, 1986).

2. CLASS SIZE. Available space and personnel influence the enrollment in each class. As a guide for action, a school may consider having a teacher and an assistant for each group of 25 students. Whatever the teacher/pupil ratio may be, the program must satisfy the needs of the individual students. An environment having ample space for each child, between 30-35 square feet, allows freedom of movement and space for individual and small group activities.

3. AGE OF ENTRANCE. Various researchers have examined the entrance age of students to kindergarten. Some states recommend that children be at least five years old before December 1 of the kindergarten year. Other states admit children whose fifth birthday occurs before the end of the first term. Recently some states have established different criteria for students who have attended a nursery or day care program and for students who have not attended such programs. The administrator should be knowledgeable of the policy of the local school district and of the arch/diocese. A flexible admission procedure, however, best satisfies the needs of all students. Such a policy examines each individual applicant to ascertain if that child has the necessary readiness skills to be successful in the school's program. The potential to succeed in the school's program may outweigh age considerations.

4. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. An attractive, well arranged and comfortable room enhances the learning environment. Physical and health facilities need to comply with the local and state regulations. Drinking fountains and lavatories should be designed for the young children and should be easily accessible.

The kindergarten room provides adequate ventilation and lighting, spaces for work and storage, and bulletin boards and chalkboards at the eye level of young children. Light-colored walls and furniture appeal to young children. Suggested furniture includes small movable chairs and tables (round and rectangular), low bookcases and cabinets. Floor covering may vary from one part of the room to another; e.g., a carpet for the reading area and tile for the art space.

Both the teacher and students strive to maintain an orderly, uncluttered

and attractive room. An orderly environment motivates children to use the materials because they know where they can be found and where they are to be returned. Children feel secure when they can find what they want for their daily tasks. The design of the active and quiet areas of the room prevents as many distractions as possible. Block playing requires a large floor space, preferably carpeted. Sand and art should be near water, if possible. Children learn to take items from a shelf or hook without difficulty and return them with equal ease.

The teacher enlivens the environment with a few plants, fish or small animals, suitable pictures, and a small number of educational games and toys. Wherever possible the seating arrangement is flexible, unassigned, and conducive to working in small groups. As the facilitator of learning, the teacher arranges the environment so that the children can become completely involved. The teacher also assumes the role of observer, diagnostician, consultant, learner, and programmer.

5. MATERIALS. The materials encourage children's creativity, exploration, and discovery. They are also safe, durable, and attractive. Some materials may serve a variety of purposes.

Each kindergarten has the use of a record player, a television, a recorder, a filmstrip projector, and an overhead projector. Computers would also be an asset to the learning program.

For large muscle activities in the gymnasium, ropes, balls, baskets, jumpballs, a balance beam, and old tires provide the material for many interesting games.

For small muscle activities in the classroom, blocks, beads, pegboards, rings, dominoes, nuts and bolts, small letters, small locomotor toys, jigsaw puzzles, and other manipulative materials provide a variety of opportunities for developing eye-hand coordination. Finger plays can also be used to develop fine muscle coordination, see Appendix C for three such activities.

Many materials that are necessary for different learning activities can be collected free of charge. Such materials include buttons, cancelled stamps, greeting cards, milk cartons, clothespins, corks, boxes, cardboard tubing, empty food packages, sponges, foam, baby food jars with lids, pictures from newspapers and magazines, toys, and stuffed animals.

In selecting materials the staff will consider the variety in size, interest and needs of five-year old children; for example, climbing apparatus for large muscle development and scissors for small muscle development. A variety of materials satisfies the needs of the well coordinated as well as those who are not as well coordinated. This variety also satisfies the needs of students of different heights, weights, and strengths.

The Daily Schedule

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS. The kindergarten teacher carefully organizes the blocks of time in a day. Short active periods maintain interest and prevent boredom, disappointment, and frustration. Absorbing activities engage the total person of the students.

Selected learning activities for small groups include reading readiness,

mathematics, social studies, and science. The content of these depends upon the level of each group. The total class may be involved in story telling by the teacher or students, choral recitations of poetry, singing, art work, or dramatizations.

Occasional visits to neighborhood places of interest (historical sight, museum, supermarket, factory, etc.) or visitors to the class (musician, artist, doctor, nurse, salesperson, police officer, etc.) provide cultural and career enrichment education.

A daily snack of nutritious food is provided sometime in mid-morning and/or mid-afternoon.

Appropriate rest and quiet times are periodically scheduled. Children sit quietly or lie down to rest. For children unable to sleep, a time and place for quiet play are provided.

A carefully developed schedule provides an action-oriented program that fosters learning. Children learn best when they are actually involved. Their learning is directly related to things they look at, listen to, manipulate, and talk about. All the activities of the kindergarten are learning activities, even play time, since all activities build foundations for future learning skills and habits. For example, snack time includes several lessons: setting the table, storing food, serving one another, providing equal portions, and cleaning up.

A SAMPLE HALF-DAY KINDERGARTEN SCHEDULE.

15 minutes—*Arrival/Getting Ready*—During this time the students have a limited choice of self-selected, quiet and relatively short activities; e.g., reading books, housekeeping, puzzles, coloring. The teacher notes attendance during this time.

10-15 minutes—*Opening exercises*—Every day begins with a welcome to each child from the teacher and staff. At the start of the day, the teacher calls the whole class together for the following activities:

1. Prayers—This includes both recited and spontaneous prayers.
2. Patriotic Remembrance—This may be the salute to the flag and/or the singing of some patriotic song.
3. Review of Current Events—This discussion centers on the weather, the calendar, and at least one news story.
4. Plan for the Day—The teacher outlines for the students the day's schedule. Emphasis is given to special changes in the schedule.

10 minutes—*Direct Instruction*—The teacher presents a short lesson about God followed by a presentation on a concept related to the day's activities.

90 minutes—*Work Period*—The teacher organizes small groups or individual learning activities in language arts, mathematics, perceptual skills, motor coordination, science, and social studies.

10-15 minutes—*Play Period*—If the weather is agreeable and the school has a safe playground, the teacher allows the students to play. At times, especially at the start of the school year, this should be formally organized by the teacher. At other times, later in the school year, this may be a period of free play. This period fosters the development of large muscle coordination. Upon returning to the classroom the students engage in some quiet activity such as finger play, listening to a story, or coloring.

15 minutes—*Recess*—During this time the students have their lavatory

period and their mid-morning snack.

10 minutes—*Music*—This provides an opportunity for the students to learn rhymes which are set to rhythm.

10 minutes—*Literature*—The following activities of listening to stories, records or viewing dramatizations, filmstrips or videotapes introduce students to the world of literature.

10-15 minutes—*Preparation for Dismissal*—This includes clean-up, prayers and dressing.

A SAMPLE FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN SCHEDULE.

15 minutes—*Arrival/Getting Ready*-See previous schedule.

10 minutes—*Opening Exercises*—See previous schedule.

10 minutes—*Direct Instruction*—See previous schedule.

90 minutes—*Work Period*—See previous schedule.

15 minutes—*Recess*—See previous schedule.

15 minutes—*Play Period*—See previous schedule.

10 minutes—*Story Time*—During this time the teacher reads to the class some story of literary quality. A portion of the story is read each day. The story should be able to be completed in one week.

30-45 minutes—*Lunch*

10-15 minutes—*Quiet Time*—The students individually engage in some quiet activity; e.g., looking at picture books, tracing, completing puzzles, cutting pictures, etc. This helps to establish the environment for learning that has been interrupted by the lunch period.

30-45 minutes—*Rest Period*—During this period the students may take a nap. Individual cots or mats are used if they are available.

45 minutes—*Work Period*—This continues the morning's work.

45 minutes—*Miscellaneous Activities*—Depending upon the day of the week, the students engage in a variety of activities which may include art, music, physical education, dramatization, guest speaker, etc.

15 minutes—*Preparation for Dismissal*—See previous schedule.

The daily schedule should be followed on a regular basis. This aids in developing the children's sense of order. The teacher presents a full explanation to the class when changes occur in the daily schedule.

Chapter V

The Kindergarten Curriculum

Religious Education

In their capacity as first religious educators, parents have the opportunity to begin children's religious education, and to help them know and love God. Knowing a person means having an intimate, close, personal relationship with that person. In the home, children learn to know and love the Creator and to understand that God loves and cares for them.

Parents develop this realization in their children by words and, more effectively, by example. The love of a father and mother for their children and their love for each other in family life are daily examples of Christian attitudes which form part of the children's religious orientation. Parents can prepare their children for Christian living by helping them to see the value of other persons.

The prayer life of preschool youngsters is limited. They learn to pray by watching the parents pray at home and at church. Children join parents in asking, in thanking, in expressing dependence and gratitude to the Creator. Kindergarten children learn from their parents that the church is the place where God lives, where the family gathers to praise God, and where other people show love to others.

Children enter kindergarten from different home environments with varying degrees of religious orientation. The kindergarten teacher's work complements that of the parents in the religious education and formation of children. The teacher builds on the foundation that the parents have laid. The teacher reinforces the students' concepts of self and relationship to God, to other children, and to adults. In addition the teacher seeks to make students aware of God, the life of Christ, the Blessed Mother, and some other saints. The kindergarten teacher has the task of making the kindergarten environment a place of Christian love and understanding. It is a place where children can grow in the knowledge of the Creator's love for them and in love and concern for others.

In kindergarten, just as at home, children have the opportunity to learn Christianity by living it. The teacher not only tells the class about kindness, gentleness, and generosity, but provides each child with opportunities to experience these qualities.

The kindergarten teacher can utilize the materials and techniques of the other subject areas to plan interesting, meaningful activities in religious instruction. Listening to simple Bible stories, drawing pictures, singing songs, role playing, and telling stories provide first steps in the religious formation and education of children.

A special low table in a prominent place displays the Bible in such a manner that students can look at it and begin to relate some of its stories. The teacher encourages the students to have the family Bible placed in a prominent place in the home.

The following lists the religious education goals of the kindergarten and some means to achieve these goals.

1. To give children a sense of God and to help them discover God's love for them
   - by using their senses to know and love
   - by feeling the love others have for them
   - by seeing the beauty in God's creation
   - by seeing that God made all things because He loves us
   - by recognizing that all good things are gifts of God
2. To help children discover that they are loveable
   - by recognizing through differences in size, shape, color that this uniqueness is God given
   - by accepting the creative works of God
3. To help the children become aware of people who love them
   - by recognizing members of their families
   - by recognizing people who care for them
4. To introduce the person of Jesus
   - by relating stories of the New Testament
5. To help children form a habit of prayer
   - by introducing simple, childlike prayers as well as the Our Father and Hail Mary
   - by encouraging spontaneous prayers on special occasions
6. To give children a sense of praying with God's family
   - by praying with the group
   - by participating in liturgies
   - by helping them to enjoy visits to the church
7. To introduce the values of justice and peace
   - by shaping attitudes that focus on sharing with others
   - by evoking a sense of caring for other people
8. To insure that students respect all life
   - by showing concern for sick people
   - by recognizing that all creation (people, animals, plants) need care

Language Arts

The language arts include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The language arts enable people to communicate with one another. Language is part of every phase of the kindergarten program. Since these are complex skills and mastered slowly, the teacher introduces them to the students gradually and in a natural manner.

1. LISTENING AND SPEAKING. The kindergarten program provides opportunities to practice formal spoken English when playing with blocks, sharing toys, participating in rhythm games, singing, doing "Show and Tell," or giving reports. Listening and speaking form the basis for the other language

arts, and children who use incorrect sentence patterns have great difficulty learning to read because their speech does not mirror the language in books.

Children derive great help from listening to records as a group or using individual headsets, from preparing their own recordings, and from expressing their own ideas through the use of puppets, dramatic play, and role playing. Tape recorders enable children to hear their own voices, to discover their errors, and to measure their improvements in speech.

The teacher who speaks slowly, clearly, and accurately improves the children's vocabulary and sentence structure by example. In all activities, the teacher talks no more than is necessary and regularly encourages children to verbalize what they do. The teacher employs the children's experiences to develop their abilities to describe orally, to recite directions, to list steps sequentially, to identify new words and concepts, to use different sentence patterns, and to identify their own speech errors.

Kindergarten students develop the following listening and speaking skills:

LISTENING

Aural Comprehension
- —retell a story in own words
- —note sequence in a story
- —classify groups of words
- —detect inconsistencies

Participation in Listening
- —attend to simple commands
- —recognize that listening is difficult when many distracting noises are present
- —listen purposefully and selectively

Auditory Discrimination
- —distinguish different classroom sounds
- —distinguish between musical sounds
- —discriminate consonant and vowel sounds
- —supply rhyming words
- —recognize changes in intonation
- —recognize emotional content from intonation
- —respond to rhythm
- —identify repeated words or groups of words
- —name sounds they hear inside and outside

SPEAKING

Participation in Speaking
- —participation in "Show and Tell" activities
- —make up one's own story
- —improvise dialogue from various role-playing situations
- —listen to directions, then repeat them

Content in Speaking
- —explain a picture
- —name correctly objects
- —compare and contrast objects
- —recount events of a story in order
- —relate an experience
- —express feelings and opinions
- —suggest a title for a picture

Delivery in Speaking
- —use creative dramatics to act out familiar situations
- —look directly at a person who is speaking
- —speak loudly so all can hear

2. READING AND WRITING. Young children learn to read and write in a different manner than older children who receive structured and formal lessons. Children's maturity level, readiness, interest, language proficiency, and past exeriences dictate the specific program that they follow. Since the reading and writing activities at this level should come from within the students, the use of a formal instructional program is discouraged.

Reading and writing develop as natural processes. Children learn words from the labeled items in the classroom. Students observe the teacher's hand moving from left to right across a page of print. Young readers discover the sequence of a story through its pictures. Kindergartners recognize story words; e.g., *Once upon a time . . . , They lived happily ever after, finally.* They identify differences in capital and small letters. A gradual development takes place as children realize that the words they hear and speak can be printed and even read by other people. Identifying likenesses and differences in symbols represents a first step in reading and writing. Initial reading and writing experiences flow from the interests of the children.

Reading grows out of the early language arts activities. If children have listened to others tell their interesting experiences, if they have heard stories read to them, if the children have completed units in different areas that appeal to them, if they have been presented with sounds, letters, and words, and if youngsters have begun printing their own names, they are ready for the great adventure of reading. The kindergarten teacher does not hurry children into reading because children vary greatly in their readiness for reading.

Kindergarten students develop the following reading and writing skills:

READING

—progress from left to right across a page
—recognize likenesses and differences in letters, sounds, and words
—identify common words
—create their own stories
—identify their story on a chart as the teacher acts as a secretary
—draw a picture of a story they heard
—handle books properly
—find position in a book and on the page

WRITING

—write their own names
—dictate stories
—fill in blanks in a story
—add ending to a story
—supply captions to pictures

3. LITERATURE. The school library forms an integral part of the kindergarten program. The school librarian provides regular opportunities for story time, examining picture books and periodicals, and borrowing books. Periodically the teacher brings the class to the local public library.

The daily story time helps children enjoy books and appreciate literary language. The kindergarten teacher has a whole repertoire from which to choose these stories. The imaginations of the students expand as they

picture in their own minds the characters and the events in the stories read to them.

Parents should be encouraged to read daily to these young children. Children who have been regularly read to have fewer problems in learning to read than children who have not had this regular experience. The kindergarten teacher should send home to parents lists of books that they may wish to select from the public library or to purchase for their own children for their birthdays or for Christmas presents.

As kindergarten students hear and recite poetry, they learn to recognize rhythm and mood in a selection. Children clap their hands to the beat of a given selection. They recognize the similarities in the sounds of certain words and they identify words that create a mood in a poetry selection.

Kindergarten students develop the following abilities in literature:

—determine what the story is about
—identify the character(s)
—describe the character
—describe the feelings of the character
—explain why they like or dislike the character
—relate the sequence of events in the story

4. OTHER LANGUAGE ARTS. The entire day in the kindergarten class offers abundant opportunities for language instruction. While formal grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and usage are not taught, the teacher does correct these errors in a natural way which fosters learning. For example, the teacher may say, "Bobby, when we wish to borrow something we say, 'May I have the crayon?' Bobby, let me hear you say that."

At the end of the kindergarten, the students can do the following activities:

—add orally a naming word to a given action word
—add orally an action word to a given naming word
—describe orally an animal or object
—identify actions of other students
—repeat after the teacher a sentence in which the teacher has corrected a usage error
—distinguish between telling and asking sentences presented orally
—answer orally questions in a full sentence
—recognize upper and lower case forms of letters.

Mathematics

The kindergarten teacher introduces mathematics to young students through concrete experiences such as manipulating blocks, cubes, stones, and buttons; counting the number of children in the group; measuring size, distance, and weight; and using basic number concepts such as one-to-one correspondence, money, and time. Kindergarten children become secure in working with concrete objects, manipulative devices, Cuisenaire rods, games, and other planned experiences from which they develop mathematical concepts needed to solve simple problems.

If the teacher presents the skills by relating them to daily living activities, the students more easily internalize the concepts. Mathematical concepts

develop through observations, discovery activities, varied experiences, and playful creativity.

Kindergarten students develop the following mathematical abilities:

1. NUMBERS AND NUMERATION.

—relate numbers to daily living; e.g., "How many children are in the group today?"
"How many cookies are needed for snack?"
—sort items into groups
—classify groups as *more than, the same as, bigger than, less than*
—use word *set* to mean group
—match sets of equal size
—read, write, and count to 15
—use number line to 15
—realize that the number counted tells the number in the group
—call a set by the same number name no matter how the items are arranged
—match the number name of a set to the number on the number line
—place sets in order from largest to smallest and smallest to largest
—use *first, last, middle*

2. OPERATIONS WITH WHOLE NUMBERS.

—join two sets of fewer than ten into one set
—use concept of one more for sets of objects to ten
—solve real life mathematics problems
—act out number story; e.g., "One child was jumping rope on the playground and two more joined her. How many children are there?" One child directs three other children in what they should do to illustrate the solution to the problem.

3. OPERATIONS WITH FRACTIONS.

—recognize use of the one-half fraction; e.g., a half hour, half of the game, half the class
—fold geometric shapes in half
—recognize that things can be divided into equal parts; e.g., cake, pizza, apple, candy bar
—color a half of a given object

4. PROBABILITY AND STATISTICS.

—observe likenesses and differences
—classify objects by size, color, shape, and use
—construct graphs to represent different activities; e.g., daily temperature, daily attendance
—discuss the probability of certain events happening; e.g., whether a blindfolded child can select a blue book, whether a seed will become a plant
—estimate what will happen under certain concrete conditions; e.g., if it is cloudy, it will rain; how long it will take to finish a task
—use words to express change; e.g., more, less, likely

5. GEOMETRY AND MEASUREMENT.

—compare the length, height, width, and depth of objects
—use terms like *longer than, taller than, smaller than, shorter than, as long as* to describe objects
—weigh items in hands and then on a balance scale and state if each is *heavier, lighter, weighs more, weighs less, weighs the same*
—describe containers as holding *more, less,* or *the same as*
—measure time and compare tasks as taking *longer, less time, the same as*
—measure items employing nonstandard units of measure; e.g., foot, hand, pencil, cupful
—identify United States coins—penny, nickel, dime, quarter
—note similar shapes in the classroom; i.e., window and door, window pole and flagpole, record and clock
—count sides on geometric shapes
—create geometric pictures using block design and cut outs

Science

The wonders of God's world open to children as they observe and question all that they perceive. The classroom environment presents to children a purposeful way of observing life. In it children become aware of things created by God and those made by humans.

Young children display great curiosity about the world around them. The teacher captures and expands this sense of wonder by performing some simple science experiments. These basic activities enable children to discover for themselves just what happens. Children are not told what will happen, but rather they are helped to perform the experiment and discover the results. These easy to set up experiments involve inexpensive materials found at home or in the classroom.

The four seasons of the year provide much material for scientific observations. Animal and plant life attract the interest of youngsters at all times during the year. Planting bean seeds, observing guppies in the aquarium, feeding birds in winter excite the interest and curiosity of young children.

Kindergarten students develop the following science learnings:

1. LIVING THINGS.

Concepts

—all things are living or non-living
—living things are either a plant or an animal
—plants come from seeds and need light, food, air, and water to grow
—animals have ears, eyes, a mouth, and nose

Skills

—observe phenomena in nature
—draw pictures of plants and animals
—use a magnifying glass to see

Value

—display care for animals and plants

2. OUR GROWING BODIES.

Concepts

—growth takes place in all living things
—all people are not the same size; some are tall, others are short
—a person needs food, water, light, air and exercise to grow

Value

respect all peoples

Skills

—observe differences in individuals
—note sizes of members of the family and classmates
—discover how people are measured

3. THE EARTH AND ITS COMPOSITION.

Concepts

—pebbles are rocks about the size of marbles
—gravel is composed of loose rounded particles of broken rock
—rocks are hard non-living things

Value

—appreciate the beauty of nature

Skills

—classify rocks according to size, color, and shape
—generalize that many kinds of rocks exist

4. AIR, WATER AND WEATHER.

Concepts

—air is all around
—air can be felt but not seen
—moving air is called wind or a breeze
—air can be warm or cool

Value

—respect the differences in nature

Skills

—observe how wind moves things
—compare and contrast how wind helps and hinders people
—collect pictures showing effects of wind
—construct and explain a pinwheel
—chart the speed of the wind for a week
—identify how wind spreads pollution

5. THE SOLAR SYSTEM AND BEYOND.

Concepts

—the earth is very large
—the sun gives light and heat
—the light reflected from the moon helps people see at night
—the sun appears in the morning sky in the East and disappears in the evening in the West

Value

—show hope in all that the sun does for the earth

Skills

—test the effects of the sun on warming things
—observe how sunlight moves about the classroom
—observe how sunlight causes shadows
—point to up (above), down (beneath), opposite

6. MATTER AND ENERGY.

Concepts

—sounds are made by people, animals, and moving objects
—sounds travel in all directions
—people and animals turn toward the sound
—the ear picks up the sound
—sounds can warn of danger

Skills

—identify sounds that are near and far away
—recognize different sounds
—classify sounds; i.e., loud/soft, pleasant/unpleasant, city/farm
—collect pictures of items that make sounds

Value

—appreciate the variety of sounds

Social Studies

The social studies program at the kindergarten level focuses on helping children develop an awareness of themselves as members of a community. Children discover similarities and differences among their classmates and the families of their classmates. In addition, their relationships with others in the classroom and school become sources for social studies learning. Social interaction skills form a major component of the kindergarten program. Children study the content from their immediate environment; i.e., family, class, school, and town to develop these skills.

While the listing of learnings that follows divides the field of social studies into five areas, the activities that the teacher employs integrate many of the areas. This subject, like science, offers abundant opportunities for fostering language skills especially in the areas of vocabulary development and oral communications.

Kindergarten children develop the following social studies learnings:

1. SOCIAL CONTENT.

Concepts

—each person belongs to a family
—each member contributes to a family
—families are alike and different in some ways

Value

—deepen sense of community with their family

Skills

—define family
—state ways of contributing to family
—state personal role in the family and role of other members
—identify similarities and differences in families

2. POLITICAL CONTENT.

Concepts

—rules affect behavior
—rules help everyone to live better and safer lives
—every family and school has rules

Skills

—demonstrate responsibility for personal belongings
—relate rules to daily routine
—draw an American flag
—state rules of home, classroom, library, cafeteria, playground

Value

—recognize that rules promote justice

—explain how rules affect behavior
—recite Pledge of Allegiance
—explain the following holidays: Lincoln, Washington, Martin Luther King, Independence Day, Columbus Day, Thanksgiving

3. ECONOMIC CONTENT.

Concepts

—all families need food, clothing, shelter, health care, leisure activities

—the community provides services through schools, libraries, museums, parks, playgrounds, police and fire protection, medical facilities, day care

Value

—accept responsibility to be of service to others

Skills

—generalize the needs of families
—explain how one member of the family meets needs of other members
—cite examples of how people rely on each other in the home, classroom, school, and community
—identify community services
—classify how people use money to buy goods, services, share or save it
—identify the source of specific goods or services

4. GEOGRAPHIC CONTENT.

Concepts

—maps are pictures of places
—the globe pictures the earth

Value

—manifest faith in what others say about the world

Skills

—locate an object in relationship to another object; i.e., left/right, near/far, above/below, back/front, here/there, up/down, over/under
—identify areas on globe; i.e., land, water, United States
—draw object in correct place on paper in response to teacher direction
—draw a floor map of the classroom

5. HISTORIC CONTENT.

Concepts

—some things change; i.e., people, plants, towns, but some things don't change; i.e., qualities, laws of nature, principles of science
—customs change from one group of people to another

Skills

—compare and contrast a baby, child, and an adult
—sequence holidays during the year; e.g., birthdays, national holidays, religious feasts, anniversaries
—sequence pictures of self from birth to the present

Value

—realize that to change requires courage

—construct monthly calendar of birthdays

The Arts

The arts which include music, drama, and art expression enable young children to learn and to express their learning through the senses. Active youngsters need to put their whole selves into whatever they do. Children learn more by doing than by reading, talking, or listening. They have an inborn need to express themselves and the arts give them this opportunity. The arts also build the children's self-confidence.

1. MUSIC. Music is a natural part of young children's lives. Music can help children develop their listening skills, respond to the mood of the song, and express their own emotions. The beginnings of rhythms are taught at this age. Children clap out the rhythm of their names. Instruments for a simple rhythm band can be made from coffee cans, wooden sticks, bells, and other available materials. These instruments provide a real treat for children. Visits to the classroom by a musician enhance children's musical experiences. Children hear, see, and touch a musical instrument. Learning the names of various instruments further extends students' language development.

Musical activities provide one of the most powerful tools in developing language use. Listening to music develops an appreciation of different composers. The combination of melody, rhythm, and repetition of words calls for total response. Children listen to distinguish between loud and soft, happy and sad, fast and slow. Rhythmic activities, such as, keeping time with hands, walking in time, marching and skipping with expressive arm movements, hopping, trotting like ponies, flying like birds, keeping time with the group develop many concepts. Descriptive words, such as *loud, soft, fast, slow,* and *together* can all become meaningful through these experiences.

Kindergarten students develop the following music learnings:

Concepts

—music expresses feelings
—music can be made with the voice
—music can be made with instruments
—talented people compose music

Value

—recognize that music is one way of sharing faith in God

Skills

—recognize different rhythms
—identify characteristics and sounds of rhythm instruments
—identify some orchestra instruments
—develop coordination by interpreting music
—compare some instruments of the orchestra
—discover how instruments sound
—learn nursery rhymes, simple rote songs, and folk tunes
—dramatize a song
—add words to a song

—participate in a rhythm band
—create an interpretation of a mood in music

2. DRAMA. Drama, another means of artistic expression, helps children verbalize and act out their own feelings as well as those of others. The kindergarten provides opportunities for children to do what comes naturally to them. Young students play parts throughout each day; the teacher encourages these informal learning activities. Dramatic play allows children to use their bodies in a relaxed manner. Through role playing, young children learn acceptable modes of behavior. Children not only develop language skills but, more importantly recognize Christian values in various situations. Attitudes towards service, responsibility, community, justice and peace can be nurtured through simple, informal dramatizations.

A teacher realizes that young children enjoy learning through role playing. Action songs, poems, nursery rhymes, and legends foster both language development and memory. Memorized lines develop concentration, but they are the production of another's words. On the other hand, spontaneous conversation allows the students to express themselves freely.

Listening to records, such as "Peter and the Wolf" or "The Nutcracker Suite," helps children to catch the mood of the different scenes before they dramatize them. An opportunity to attend local plays suitable for children greatly enriches the students if the teacher prepares the group:

Kindergarten students develop the following drama learnings:

Concepts
—people react in different ways
—plays portray life

Value
—recognize that to forgive is easy

Skills
—distinguish between real and fantasy
—interpret facial expressions
—develop vocabulary to express feeling
—create stories and action for them
—use puppets to portray story characters
—make up own dramatizations
—use empty cartons, containers, cups, yarn, etc., to make props
—imitate characters in films

3. ART EXPRESSION. Art, an expressive activity, allows children to put something of themselves into their work. It can also be used as a therapeutic medium for frustrated learners by providing a change of pace and an opportunity to exert control in a pleasant diverting manner. The children experiment with color and design and with a variety of media.

Children are anxious to describe what they have produced. Encouragement is most important in art instruction because some children who may not excel in regular skill learning can develop a facility of expressing themselves in art.

Kindergarten students develop the following art learnings:

Concepts
—beauty in the world includes color and design
—people can create beauty by using different media

Value
—show respect for the works of others

Skills
—use various media
—recognize common shapes
—see gradations in color
—recognize several artists and their works

Conclusion

With all ages, Catholic education aims to foster spiritual growth and human development. Reflecting this aim, early childhood programs strive to promote children's gradual growth in awareness of themselves and their relationship to others as well as to God.

Through activities appropriate to their stages of development, children will be enriched and will then grow into fullness of life. Given a sound program and curriculum, the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten can contribute significantly to this growth.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Pouring of Rice

Material:

-- A small tray
— Two vessels: a pitcher with a handle and a spout (lip) and a long stem glass. The pitcher should be one-half or three-fourths full of rice.

Presentation:

— Invite the child to do the exercise and take him/her to the place where the material is.
— Show the child how to carry the tray with two hands to the table.
— Place it quietly on the table and be seated in a comfortable position.
— Draw attention to the rice in the pitcher.

Exercise:

— Grip the pitcher handle with two fingers and thumb.
— Gently lift it above the glass and tip it over the center of the glass.
— Tilt pitcher very slowly and keep on tilting it so that the rice grains pour in a steady stream through the spout.
— When all of the rice is in the glass, tilt the pitcher back and put it down quietly on the tray. Loosen grip on the handle of the pitcher.
— Now repeat the exercise, pouring the rice from the glass to the pitcher. Be sure to hold the stem of the glass with the thumb and two fingers.
— If any rice falls on the tray or elsewhere during the exercise, stop to pick up each grain with the thumb and index finger.
— Let the child repeat the pouring of the rice from one vessel to the other as often as he or she wishes. Then the child may return the material to the proper shelf.

Aims:

Direct

— Motive for activity
— Coordination and control of movement
— A further step in gaining independence
— A help to developing concentration

Indirect

- A preparation for pouring water and other liquids
- Control of judgment for coordination of actions
- Preparation for writing by picking up grains
- Development of a sense of order
- Development of character by persistence in picking up rice

Variations:

- Add to the quantity of rice and the number of vessels to receive the grains.
- Measure out rice, sugar, and flour in various quantities, such as spoonfuls.

Later, the child can relate this skill to activities within the home/school environment; i.e., pouring juice/milk for self and others.

Appendix B
Exercises in Equilibrium

Purposes:

—to establish equilibrium

—to develop poise, coordination of movement, carefulness

—for social development through the group exercise. Each child must adapt to the others taking part.

WALKING ON LINE.

Materials:

An ellipse marked in some way on the floor of the classroom, so that all of the children in class can use it at the same time if they wish. For a very large class, two concentric circles may be used. The line should be no wider than two finger breadths, so that only one foot of a child can be put on the line at a time. An ellipse is used so that there is as long a line as possible without a curve.

Soft, slow music like a lullaby.

Introduction:

The teacher shows this exercise by doing it. The teacher just walks around the line using a normal pace. Then each child does it, one at a time.

Exercise 1:

(a) Walk on the line, the heel of the advancing foot joining to the toe of the foot on the line.
(*Motive of control:* to do this without swaying or wavering) Each child has a turn.

(b) Place a few children on the line with spaces between. "Don't forget the spaces; don't look at your feet; keeps heads up." The heel to toe activity is used in all exercises from now on, including this one. Each child gets a turn at this.

(c) Gradually the entire class is brought onto the line.

Exercise 2:

Walk on the line carrying a flag. (Learning the flags of many countries can be an outcome of this exercise.) The flag must be watched, and so it is carried at eye level. (*Motive of control:* to fix attention on something other than the feet, that is, the angle of the flag)

Exercise 3:

Walk on the line carrying two flags, one in each hand. The flags may be at different levels, but whatever position is taken to begin must be maintained throughout. (*Motive of control:* to maintain position of flags)

Exercise 4:

Walk on the line, carrying other objects increasingly difficult to carry so that control of movement becomes more delicate:

(a) a glass of water filled almost to the brim. Color the water so that it can be seen.
(*Motive of control:* not to spill a single drop)

(b) a bell
(*Motive of control:* not to let the bell ring)

(c) various things on a tray, including things that roll
(*Motive of control:* not to drop anything)

(d) a glass of water in each hand
(*Motive of control:* not to spill a drop)

(e) a bell on the end of a long string
(*Motive of control:* not to let the bell ring)

(f) a lighted candle: single, or one in each hand
(*Motive of control:* not to let the candle drip onto hand)

(g) something on the head: book or basket
(*Motive of control:* not to the let the thing fall)

Note: When handing out things to do, distribute according to the ability of the child.

RHYTHMIC MOVEMENT.

Exercise:

This exercise follows "Walking on the Line."
It consists of various actions: running
skipping
marching
jumping
hopping

Appendix C
Finger Play Activities

Finger play:

Here is a beehive.	(Hold up one fist.)
But where are the bees?	
Hiding away where no one sees.	
Watch them and they'll come out	
of their hive!	
One, two, three, four, five!	(Pop one finger from fist at a time as you count.)
Bzzz! Bzzzz! Bzzzz!	(Wiggle fingers while moving hand back and forth.)

Finger play:

Two little eyes	(Point to each eye simultaneously
that open and close.	with index finger of each hand.)
Two little ears and	(Point to both ears,
one little nose.	then nose.)
Two little cheeks	(Point to both cheeks,
and one little chin.	then chin.)
Two little lips with	(Point to mouth. Purse
the teeth locked in.	lips together tightly.)

Finger play

I wiggle my fingers,
I wiggle my toes.
I wiggle my shoulders,
I wiggle my nose.
Now all the wiggles are out of me,
and I can sit so quietly.

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